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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad ..... (Sudan)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other items) (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners

Question of Guam (A/C.4/62/4, A/C.4/62/4/Add.1 and Add.2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bevacqua (Famoksaiyan), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Bevacqua** (Famoksaiyan) said that for more than 20 years delegations had been coming from Guam to the United Nations but little had changed at the political level. The native Chamorro population of the island had dropped, from 45 per cent in 1980 to 37 per cent in 2000, and expansion of the United States military presence, without the consent of the people or Government of Guam, would further aggravate that situation.

3. He welcomed the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which, although not legally binding, represented a symbolic victory for indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, the United States had rejected the terms of that Declaration, considering that matters relating to indigenous peoples, including in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Guam, were domestic concerns and that the international community had no mandate to interfere in such matters. Clearly the people of Guam would continue to be denied their right to self-determination by their administering Power. The United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia had rejected the Declaration, relegating the aspirations to self-determination of their indigenous peoples to the waiting room of history.

4. Although the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was already drawing to a close, little had changed in Guam, where a self-proclaimed beacon of freedom and democracy continued to deny the Chamorro people their right to self-determination and insist that the United Nations mind its own business. The United Nations must however reaffirm the administering Power's legal and moral obligation to bring about the island's decolonization in cooperation with its people and the Organization. Furthermore, in the face of the administering Power's intransigence, it was imperative that the United Nations should send a fact-finding mission to Guam, even though it had not been invited to do so.

5. *Mr. Bevacqua withdrew.*

6. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Miles (Guahan Indigenous Collective) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

7. **Ms. Miles** (Guahan Indigenous Collective) said that the United States was avoiding its responsibility as administering Power to guarantee the right of the native population of Guam to self-determination. The United States military presence on the island continued to grow and military exercises were seriously affecting the land, sea and air environment. Moreover, the United States was encouraging its allies in the region to make use of its facilities. The military alone occupied one third of the land and the needs of the military were given priority. The growing military presence on the island was attracting business interests and more and more land including beachfront property was being bought up for condominiums and gated communities. As a result, the cost of living was rising and many native Chamorros were selling their homes and land and leaving the island.

8. The native population did not have the right to vote and received little monetary support from the United States, making it difficult for young people to pursue their studies and for native representatives to make their case for self-determination before the international community. The people were increasingly alienated from their lands and culture and knew little about the vast and inter-connected cultures of Oceania. Toxic waste from military exercises was poisoning the environment and affecting their health. The people of Guam needed help.

9. The militarization of the area was a direct impediment to self-determination for the people of Guam. The United Nations must encourage the administering Power to meet its responsibilities and provide resources to educate the local population about the issue of self-determination in order to ensure an unbiased self-determination process. The Organization and the international community must also work in partnership with the people of Guam to protect the latter's natural resources and environment and ensure their economic and social development. It was also urgent that the Organization send a fact-finding mission to Guam. Her organization would continue to

defend the rights of the people of Guam with a view to helping them take their rightful place in the international community.

10. *Ms. Miles withdrew.*

11. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Auyong (Guahan Peace and Justice Coalition) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

12. **Ms. Auyong**, speaking on behalf of Ms. Guerrero (Guahan Peace and Justice Coalition), said that the increased militarization of Guam was a direct impediment to self-determination and the large-scale United States military exercises in the Pacific should spark concern in the international community. The majority of the people of Guam did not support the militarization of their island but were powerless to oppose it. The military would soon occupy more than 30 per cent of the island, and new land was being obtained from the population "through acquisition". American companies were opening stores and expensive restaurants and beachfront and other pristine property was being snapped up. Chamorro families had begun to sell their land. The island's most vital resources were for sale and the United States continued to promote the investment potential of the island throughout Asia.

13. More foreign control of the island was making self-determination for the native population increasingly difficult. Their language, culture, political sovereignty and health had been sacrificed in the interests of United States military domination and economic control. Pollution caused by military activity had led to one of the highest rates of cancer and other deadly diseases in the world.

14. The United Nations must play a more active role in promoting the right of the Chamorro people to self-determination and decolonization. The Committee should send a fact-finding mission to Guam to document the current situation. The island also needed more resources for educational campaigns about self-determination and decolonization.

15. *Ms. Auyong withdrew.*

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/62/3, A/C.4/62/3/Add.2-6, Add.8-9, Add.17, Add.19-20, Add.23, Add.30, Add.34-36, Add.38, Add.43 and Add.48)

16. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Pleite (European Parliament) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

17. **Mr. Pleite** (European Parliament) said that, in October 2006, the European Parliament had sent an ad hoc delegation to visit Western Sahara but had been refused entry by the Moroccan authorities because some members of the delegation belonged to the Parliament's Friendship Group with Western Sahara, showing a clear lack of respect on the part of Morocco for the European Parliament. In 2002 and 2007, entry had also been refused to a group of Spanish elected officials and journalists, and a delegation of Scandinavian diplomats, respectively. Morocco denied entry to international observers because it wanted to hide its human rights violations and the virtual state of siege under which the Saharan people lived, and to suppress freedom of movement and expression. Seven members of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights had recently been arrested for participating in a peaceful demonstration and, in June, the police had brutally repressed peaceful demonstrations by Saharan students.

18. He deplored the signing, in 2005, of a fishing agreement between the European Union and Morocco because it included Western Saharan waters, thereby illegally conferring on Morocco the status of administering Power, with the right to exploit the area's resources. Morocco was, in fact, an occupying Power; the legal administering Power was Spain. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) called for direct negotiations between the two parties aimed at a political solution guaranteeing the right to self-determination of the Saharan people. To date, however, Morocco had shown little real desire to resolve the conflict. As rightful administering Power, Spain must, in cooperation with the international community, ensure that a political solution was reached that guaranteed the Saharan people's right to self-determination.

19. *Mr. Pleite withdrew.*

20. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Basinet (actress/recording artist) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

21. **Ms. Basinet**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that for 30 years the majority of the Saharan people had lived in the most inhospitable corner of the Algerian desert while the remainder were subject to repression by the Moroccan authorities. The question of Western Sahara was one of Africa's longest unresolved conflicts and the United Nations had an

obligation to act to bring about a resolution. The Saharan people were strong and self-reliant but they needed help in order to resolve the political impasse. The refugees in the camps needed resources to educate their children and to promote entrepreneurship, for example through microcredit schemes. They needed medical and building supplies, basic necessities, solar-powered generators, computers, Internet access and a way to market what they produced. The political and microeconomic needs of the Saharan people could be met provided that the international community was willing to help.

22. *Ms. Basinet withdrew.*

23. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ramos (American Association of Jurists) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

24. **Ms. Ramos** (American Association of Jurists) said that Morocco had repressed, incarcerated and tortured the Saharan people and she called on the Secretary-General to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Saharan prisoners. Decolonization must be carried out by means of a free and transparent referendum monitored by the United Nations and international observers. Spain should treat the question of Western Sahara as a question of decolonization in accordance with international law and the United Nations should protect the Territory's integrity and natural resources.

25. She called on the Special Committee to take note of the suffering of the refugees living in the Tindouf camps and expressed the hope that the current talks taking place between the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y del Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) and the Government of Morocco would pave the way for a referendum without preconditions.

26. *Ms. Ramos withdrew.*

27. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Bachir-Abderahman (Saharawi Youth Union) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

28. **Ms. Bachir-Abderahman** (Saharawi Youth Union) said that the Government of Morocco was systematically violating international law by preventing the Saharan people from exercising their right to self-determination. The right of the Saharan people to self-determination had been established in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions as well as in agreements between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. Although it had been agreed, as far back as 1991, that the Saharans should be given the opportunity to choose between independence and integration in a free, fair and transparent referendum, that referendum had yet to be held. Moreover, Morocco was now offering autonomy as the ultimate solution.

29. Since May 2005, Saharan students and youth had been attacked and detained by the Moroccan police and armed forces throughout Morocco and Western Sahara. It had been reported that some of the attacks had involved severe beatings and sexual abuse, and even harassment of hospitalized victims. On behalf of the Saharan youth she urged the United Nations to take immediate action to prevent further human rights violations in the occupied territories of Western Sahara.

30. *Ms. Bachir-Abderahman withdrew.*

31. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Lenz (Christ the Rock Community Church) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

32. **Ms. Lenz** (Christ the Rock Community Church) said that living conditions in Western Sahara had significantly deteriorated during 2007. Hunger was more widespread, educational opportunities were fewer and many young adults had been forced to leave their homes. More people had died simply because they had not received adequate medical attention. Those who had remained in their occupied homeland had become further removed from their cultural identity because Morocco continued to import its culture, language and identity into the Territory of Western Sahara. A referendum was essential to allow the Saharan people to determine their future and be released from their suffering.

33. *Ms. Lenz withdrew.*

34. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Boukhari (Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

35. **Mr. Boukhari** (Frente POLISARIO) said that Morocco's obstruction and/or rejection of the various peace plans proposed over the years, together with its policy of violating human rights in the occupied Territory, was undermining negotiations and the credibility of the United Nations. Its latest proposal, concerning autonomy for Western Sahara, implied the precondition of considering the territory as an integral

part of Morocco. However, Morocco had no sovereignty over Western Sahara. The latter was a Non-Self-Governing Territory and its future must be decided by the people of the Territory.

36. On 10 April 2007, the Frente POLISARIO had submitted to the Secretary-General its own proposal stressing the need for a referendum on self-determination and offering Morocco the opportunity to discuss strategic relations.

37. The two parties had held two rounds of negotiations in the framework of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) and a third was scheduled for later that year. While the Frente POLISARIO had fully cooperated with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy during those negotiations, the Government of Morocco had shown that it had no intention of complying with any United Nations resolutions aimed at securing the decolonization of Western Sahara. Moreover, its selective interpretation of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) — most recently at the Committee's previous meeting — had shown that it was not willing to enter into negotiations in good faith.

38. Recalling that the aim of the negotiations was to ensure that the Saharawi people were given the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination and decide on their future themselves, he said that the third Frente POLISARIO was still hopeful that in the third round of negotiations Morocco would engage in the negotiating process in good faith.

39. *Mr. Boukhari withdrew.*

40. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Marcelli (international lawyer) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

41. **Mr. Marcelli**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that the application of the principle of self-determination to Western Sahara had been affirmed by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 16 October 1975 and by various United Nations resolutions. However, application of the principle would necessitate a referendum in which the population would be asked to choose between a variety of alternatives: independence, annexation to Morocco or autonomy. When registering the voters it would be important to bear in mind that the military occupation had considerably changed the composition of the resident population.

42. Finally he stressed that a peaceful solution to the question of Western Sahara was essential for the stability of the region as a whole. If the Saharan people did choose independence, it would be important for the Saharan State to establish cooperative links with all the States of the region based on the principles of cooperation and the peaceful resolution of international disputes.

43. *Mr. Marcelli withdrew.*

44. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rocha Maqueda (Asociación de Amistad del Pueblo Saharaui de Extremadura) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

45. **Mr. Rocha Maqueda** (Asociación de Amistad del Pueblo Saharaui de Extremadura) said that the international community had not done enough to resolve the question of Western Sahara, and Moroccan and multinational companies continued to exploit the natural resources of the Territory in contravention of United Nations resolutions and international law. Moreover, the latest Moroccan proposal — the Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region — did not allow for the possibility of a referendum.

46. If the problem continued to fester, it might destabilize the entire region. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) had made it clear that the Saharan people had the right to self-determination. He therefore called on the Government of Spain to support a just and fair referendum on self-determination.

47. *Mr. Rocha Maqueda withdrew.*

48. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Aurrekoetxea (Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui a nivel del Estado Español) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

49. **Mr. Aurrekoetxea** (Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui a nivel del Estado Español) said that Saharans were a peaceful people, intent on gaining their independence through negotiation because they still believed in the power of words. Despite having endured more than 30 years of suffering at the hands of Morocco, they remained steadfast in their quest for freedom and self-determination. However, they were not prepared to continue suffering indefinitely.

50. In order to avert a return to armed struggle, he called on the friends of Western Sahara, particularly Spain, which continued to have an obligation towards

Western Sahara as the administering Power, France and the United States to request the Security Council to consider the situation in Western Sahara under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in order to force Morocco to comply with international law and bring about the independence of the Saharan people.

51. *Mr. Aurrekoetxea withdrew.*

52. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Alonso Rodríguez (Liga Española Pro-Derechos Humanos) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

53. **Mr. Alonso Rodríguez** (Liga Española Pro-Derechos Humanos) said that it was intolerable that the question of Western Sahara remained unresolved after 32 years. The dialogue between the parties initiated in Manhasset on the basis of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) offered an opportunity to resolve the conflict and the international community could not afford to allow those negotiations to fail.

54. The Spanish Government should take note that peace in Western Sahara and the plight of the Saharan people were of great concern to Spanish society, and it should not forget its historical responsibility in the conflict. In that regard, he called on all Western Governments and the Spanish Government in particular to contribute to the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order to aid Saharan refugees.

55. His organization noted with great concern the large number of unexploded mines and explosive devices found throughout Western Sahara, including areas where military observers and vehicles of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) operated on a daily basis. Every month civilians and livestock were killed or injured by mines and the number was sure to grow should refugees begin to return.

56. *Mr. Alonso Rodríguez withdrew.*

57. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Moreno Navarro (University of Seville) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

58. **Mr. Moreno Navarro** (University of Seville) said that it was indisputable that the Saharan people were a nation with a unique historical, cultural and political identity that had been denied the right to self-determination. The question of Western Sahara would have been resolved long ago had Spain not betrayed the Saharan people and signed the tripartite agreement with Morocco and Mauritania. While that crime had been perpetrated by the fascist regime of General Franco, no democratically elected Spanish Government had ever attempted to right that injustice.

59. Morocco's insistence that the conflict in Western Sahara was an internal matter was merely a pretext for its continued occupation of the territory. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), and others before it, had affirmed the right of the Saharan people to freely decide their future in a referendum. The Moroccan autonomy proposal did not meet the requirements of a genuine referendum on self-determination. Such a referendum should offer two distinct possibilities: integration into Morocco or independence.

60. The civil resistance of the Saharan people continued to grow notwithstanding terrible police and military repression. The number of human rights violations had also increased and human rights advocates had repeatedly been denied entry into Western Sahara. Although the resistance activities had been totally peaceful, following the 1991 ceasefire, the younger generation of Saharans might be tempted to resort to violence if they felt that the international community had abandoned them.

61. The United Nations had been unduly tolerant of Morocco's behaviour and Morocco had interpreted that tolerance as tacit approval of its illegal occupation. Unlike Indonesia, Serbia and Iraq, Morocco had enjoyed total impunity; that impunity must end in order for justice and human rights to prevail.

62. *Mr. Moreno Navarro withdrew.*

63. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Peraita Lechosa (Seville Association of Friendship with the Saharan People) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

64. **Mr. Peraita Lechosa** (Seville Association of Friendship with the Saharan People) said that while Morocco had begun direct negotiations with the Frente POLISARIO, its flagrant violations of the human rights of the Saharan people continued.

65. Torture and other forms of inhumane treatment practiced by the Moroccan authorities had led to extensive loss of life and limb. Many Saharans had also been kidnapped and either imprisoned or banished from urban areas. The rights to peaceful assembly and

political organization were denied, and prisons were overcrowded.

66. He called for an end to the media blackout in Western Sahara; expansion of the mandate of MINURSO to include protection of the rights of Saharan citizens; the signature by Morocco of the principal international human rights instruments; cessation of the exploitation of the natural resources of Western Sahara; an investigation into the flagrant human rights violations committed by Morocco; the clearing of all landmines in Western Sahara; and the closure of the so-called "black prison" in Laayoune.

67. *Mr. Peraita Lechosa withdrew.*

68. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Quatrano (Osservatorio Internazionale Onlus) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

69. **Mr. Quatrano** (Osservatorio Internazionale Onlus) said that, while the Saharan people were engaged in a peaceful struggle for self-determination, the Moroccan authorities, by imposing a media blackout on Western Sahara, were trying to create the impression that the Saharan problem did not exist. Notwithstanding Morocco's claims to the contrary, the quest for self-determination was broadly supported by the people of Western Sahara and the sense of national identity was deeply rooted.

70. Morocco had responded by a comprehensive and sustained campaign of repression, brutality and torture. Judicial proceedings against militants did not conform to international standards. Trials were often conducted solely on the basis of police records and testimony; defendants were not allowed to present witnesses or evidence in their defence; and forced confessions bearing forged signatures were not uncommon. Moreover, the courts had never followed up on defendants' claims of torture. Sentences were severe and not proportionate to the crimes. Even international human rights observers were not exempt from Moroccan intimidation.

71. It was vital that a proper referendum be held. To that end, MINURSO should be given the additional mandate of safeguarding the civil and political rights of the Saharan people living in the occupied territories.

72. *Mr. Quatrano withdrew.*

73. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Stanley (RockFish Church) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

74. **Mr. Stanley** (RockFish Church) said that if the nations of the world had the power to enforce a free and fair referendum, then they had the authority to act in pursuit of that goal. Failure to take steps to ensure that a free vote was held in Western Sahara would not enable those nations to escape the consequences of their inaction.

75. While there were many problems in the world, the situation in Western Sahara was a disgrace. The Saharan people had been "killed" over and again by the broken promises and failed legislation of the international community. He implored the United Nations to decolonize Western Sahara.

76. *Mr. Stanley withdrew.*

77. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Teuwen (Oxfam Solidarity), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

78. **Ms. Teuwen** (Oxfam Solidarity) said that until such time as the Saharan people were able to exercise their right to self-determination, they deserved the assistance and protection guaranteed under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Convention on the Status of Refugees. Oxfam Solidarity continued to receive reports of human rights violations in the part of Western Sahara occupied by Morocco. Morocco was also not willing to acknowledge its responsibility for the Saharan refugees which it had forced into exile. Nominally the Saharan refugees living in Algeria in the Tindouf camps were protected by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and received assistance through the World Food Programme (WFP), but those organizations had failed to fully meet their commitments. Severe food shortages and consequent anaemia and malnutrition, especially among women and children in the camps, had been reported by both the Saharawi and the Algerian Red Crescent, which had urgently appealed for international donations. Her organization supported that appeal and urged the international community to fulfil its obligations until a just and durable solution was found.

79. *Ms. Teuwen withdrew.*

80. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Scholte (Defense Forum Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

81. **Ms. Scholte** (Defense Forum Foundation) said that the continuing conflict resulting from the failure of the United Nations to conduct the referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara had also forced almost 200,000 people to live as refugees in the Sahara desert, and subjected the Saharans living in occupied Western Sahara to killings, torture and beatings at the hands of Morocco, as documented by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others.

82. Nevertheless, the Saharans had continued to advocate their right to self-determination non-violently and lawfully, and the Saharan leadership had pledged to abide by the outcome of a vote on self-determination. Most Moroccan citizens had no idea what was happening in Western Sahara because their Government jailed its own journalists and human rights advocates who tried to report on the issue, and had harassed international observers who tried to go to the Territory. Despite Morocco's past cruelty towards them, the Saharans had continued to pledge that, should they win in the referendum, the Saharan Republic would be a good neighbour to Morocco, as also to Algeria and Mauritania, all of which would be strengthened in their own fight against terrorism, proving that the democratic ideals and universal values for which the Saharans had struggled could lead to prosperity and peace, and fulfilling a great goal of the African Union: stability in the Maghreb and the chance to develop the region economically for the benefit of all residing there.

83. Saharans accounted for the bulk of the people still living under colonial rule, and the Committee should act aggressively to end the situation.

84. *Ms. Scholte withdrew.*

85. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Pinto Leite (International Platform of Jurists for East Timor) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

86. **Mr. Pinto Leite** (International Platform of Jurists for East Timor), speaking also on behalf of the Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara (Foundation for the Self-determination of Western Sahara), observed that the question of Western Sahara continued to be the main stumbling block to the eradication of colonialism and that Morocco continued to defy United Nations resolutions and international law. Some countries had turned a blind eye to its illegal annexation of Western Sahara, and were now lending it a veil of legality by supporting the Moroccan proposal to give the Territory autonomy within the State of Morocco in exchange for recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over it, a proposal that recalled the case of East Timor in relation to Indonesia a decade earlier. In the Moroccan proposal, autonomy would be imposed on the Saharan people before they had had the chance to freely choose their status, contravening principle IX of General Assembly resolution 1541 (XIV).

87. In a recent conference held in The Hague on international law and the question of Western Sahara, jurists from 12 different countries had been unanimous in concluding that the occupation of Western Sahara and the exploitation of its natural resources were unlawful, and that a free and fair referendum in the Territory, according to the original United Nations/Organization of African Unity peace plan, was the only legal solution for the problem. He appealed to all States to take the principled position, to stop the pillage of the Saharan natural resources and support the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination.

88. *Mr. Pinto Leite withdrew.*

89. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Chauprade (Sorbonne University) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

90. **Mr. Chauprade** (Sorbonne University) noted that Morocco, without relinquishing its claim to sovereignty over that part of its national territory, had decided to give its Saharan inhabitants, by way of a referendum, control over their own affairs through legislative, executive and judicial institutions. That was not a concession to the Frente POLISARIO but a desire to advance the Saharans and balance their Moroccan character and their particular identity. That latest development was part of the ongoing democratic modernization of Morocco, in the Saharan province as in the rest of the country. Democracy consisted in asking the inhabitants of a country how they wished to live in the nation, not in asking them whether they wanted to leave the country. No other State faced with a separatist minority would do otherwise.

91. It should be asked what a POLISARIO State would be like. One need only imagine the Tindouf camps expanded into a police state, controlled by an

undemocratic and internally violent junta that was holding its population captive. It ought to be clear which of the two choices the Saharans would make. Given the geopolitical evolution of the region, where nomadic separatist movements were springing up in Mali and Niger as well as Morocco, the States of Saharan Africa would do well to reflect what the effect would be on their own unity and sovereignty if a small Saharan state with an Islamist minority were to be established. As a general rule, the Islamist movements supported themselves by trafficking in weapons, drugs and human beings and other types of organized crime, under the control of the various nomadic separatists like the Frente POLISARIO in Western Sahara.

92. National sovereignty, one of the basic principles of the United Nations, must hold strong against the threat of powerful transnational agents and local separatist movements dabbling in organized crime and religious fanaticism. Peace among peoples rested on the respect for sovereignty not on the fabrication of spurious identities.

93. *Mr. Chauprade withdrew.*

94. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bartolozzi (Regional councilman of Tuscany) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

95. **Mr. Bartolozzi** (Regional councilman of Tuscany) said that the complex conflict in Western Sahara had implications not only for the territorial integrity of Morocco but also for the future of the Maghreb and the stability of the entire Mediterranean basin. Morocco had recently proposed an autonomy statute for the Saharan region that offered a flexible basis for the ongoing negotiations and showed that Morocco was ready to seek a mutually acceptable final political solution in conformity with international standards. The proposal, which was welcomed in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) as serious and credible, was preferable to the proposal of the Frente POLISARIO — which merely rehashed old positions — because it introduced the new element of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty, both renouncing total integration of Western Sahara and preserving the nation's territorial integrity.

96. The Secretary-General had underscored the openness of the Moroccan initiative and his Personal Envoy had recently pointed out that self-determination did not necessarily have to lead to independence. The parties themselves were prepared to resume negotiations, and the international community must press for a speedy resolution during the coming rounds. The continuing conflict was having serious repercussions: the Saharan refugees living in inhuman conditions for the past 32 years had, in desperation, begun to turn to clandestine terrorist or human trafficking networks to escape from the Tindouf camps, thus threatening the stability of the Mediterranean region.

Rights of reply

97. **Mr. Romero Martinez** (Honduras), referring to the United Kingdom's statement in right of reply at the previous meeting, said he wished to clarify that his own statement had been couched in general terms without reference to any particular situation among States.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.